<u>REMARKS</u>

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated November 6, 2003. Claims 36 to 50 remain pending in the application, of which Claims 36, 40 and 44 are independent. Claims 36, 40, 44 and 48 to 50 have been amended. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 36 to 50 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,287,194 (Lobiondo) and references incorporated therein, namely, U.S. Patent No. 5,045,880 (Evanitsky) and U.S. Patent No. 5,036,361 (Filion). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The present invention concerns selecting and assigning print data to an image output apparatus from among a plurality of image output apparatuses on a network. According to the invention, selection conditions are limited within a range so defined that a respective one of the plurality of image output apparatuses on the network satisfies the selection condition, where the range represents a sum of the functions provided by each respective one of the plurality of image output apparatuses on the network. The limited selection conditions are then displayed on a display so the operator can designate a desired selection condition. Thus, the selection conditions that are displayed are limited so that a respective one of the plurality of image output apparatus' on the network satisfies the conditions.

For a better understanding, consider the following example. Assume that printers A, B and C are connected to the network and are available to be used. Printer A provides functions F1 and F2, printer B provides functions F2 and F3, and printer C provides function F3, but none of printers A, B or C provide a function F4. In this case, the sum of functions is determined by (F1 and F2 of printer A) + (F2 and F3 of printer B) +

(F3 of printer C). Thus, the sum of functions is F1 + F2 + F3 and therefore, the selection

conditions are limited so that only F1, F2 and F3 displayed and the operator is not allowed

to select F4. As a result, if the operator selects any one of the displayed functions, he can

be assured that at least one of the plurality of apparatus can perform the function.

Referring specifically to the claims, amended independent Claim 36 is a

data processing apparatus having a printer driver for generating print data in accordance

with a print request issued by an application program assigning the generated print data to

one of a plurality of image output apparatuses and that communicates with the plurality of

image output apparatuses via a network, the data processing apparatus comprising limiting

means for limiting selection conditions of functions provided by the plurality of image

output apparatuses, which are associated with printing and capable of being designated by

an operator, within a range so defined that at least one of the plurality of image output

apparatuses satisfies a selection condition that can be designated by the operator among the

limited selection conditions, the range being represented by a sum of the functions

provided by each respective one of the plurality of image output apparatuses on the

network, control means for controlling a display device to display the selection conditions

limited by the limiting means in a form such that the operator can designate a desired

selection condition, and constructing means for constructing, within the data processing

apparatus, a plurality of logical interfaces, for transmitting the print data directly to one of

the plurality of image output apparatuses via the network, each of the plurality of logical

interfaces respectively corresponding to the plurality of image output apparatuses, wherein

the generated print data is assigned to one of the plurality of image output apparatuses that

is selected based on a selection condition designated by the operator and information which

is stored in advance and which indicates print functions of the plurality of image output apparatuses.

Amended independent Claims 40 and 44 are method and memory medium claims, respectively, that substantially correspond to Claim 36.

The applied art, alone or in any permissible combination, is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of Claims 36, 40 and 44. More particularly, the applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of limiting selection conditions of functions provided by the plurality of image output apparatuses, which are associated with printing and capable of being designated by an operator, within a range so defined that at least one of a plurality of image output apparatuses satisfies a selection condition that can be designated by the operator among the limited selection conditions, the range being represented by a sum of the functions provided by each respective one of the plurality of image output apparatuses on the network.

Lobiondo is seen to disclose distributing a job among a plurality of printers so that if printing of a print job by a single printer is not allowed, the print job is allocated to a plurality of available printers instead so that different portions of the job are printed by different printers. However, Lobiondo is not seen to disclose or to suggest anything with regard to limiting selection conditions within a range so defined that at least one of a plurality of image output apparatuses satisfies a selection condition that can be designated by the operator among the limited selection conditions, where the range represents a sum of the functions provided by each respective one of the plurality of image output apparatuses.

Evanitsky is merely seen to disclose the use of a range of reduction/enlargement percentages. However, the range of Evanitsky is not seen to represent a sum of the functions provided by each respective one of a plurality of image

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output apparatuses on the network. In other words, the range depicted in Evantisky's Figure 14 is merely seen to correspond to a single function that can be set for a single copier, but is not one that represents a sum of the functions provided by each respective one of a plurality of apparatuses on the network. Accordingly, Evantisky is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of the present invention.

Filion is not seen to add anything to overcome the deficiencies of Lobiondo and Evanitsky and is also not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of limiting selection conditions of functions provided by the plurality of image output apparatuses, which are associated with printing and capable of being designated by an operator, within a range so defined that at least one of a plurality of image output apparatuses satisfies a selection condition that can be designated by the operator among the limited selection conditions, the range being represented by a sum of the functions provided by each respective one of the plurality of image output apparatuses.

In view of the foregoing deficiencies of the applied art, all of Claims 36 to 50 are believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

_Ed... /L...._

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